

November 2, 2015

To the Members of the Amherst Select Board, the Amherst School Committee, the Amherst Housing Authority, and the Amherst Police Department:

Like so many of my neighbors, my wife and I are deeply concerned about the possibility of the Town of Amherst granting a liquor license to the 'convenience store' on Triangle Street, between E. Pleasant and Cottage/Pray Streets. The key issue to highlight here is the safety threat to our residential and Amherst High School population, with particular interrelated relevance to young, elderly, and female residents of the immediately surrounding neighborhood.

Just as we already have inebriated citizens gathering at certain times of day and night around the closer-to-town Cousins' parking lot as well as along what has become known as Amherst's "alcohol and drug alley" between the rear end of Cousins' building and the Amherst town cemetery, the prospect of yet another such alcoholic magnet still nearer to a residential community and to ARHS grounds is chilling. As you will readily recognize, the Triangle Street 'convenience store' in its 'Limited Business Zone' is located within a major walking route that our high school student pedestrians take as soon as school is out each weekday afternoon... as they head to Amherst Center, to their nearby homes, and to their friends on the UMASS campus. As it is, the 'convenience' store is such a popular difficult-to-handle afternoon gathering place that the owner has posted a sign that limits to two the number of students who can be inside the store at the same time. Students are even asked to leave their backpacks outside the store.

At the same time, this is the sidewalk route we see taken in good weather by numbers of elderly and handicapped renters in the two State-subsidized housing tracts immediately west of our Cottage Street homes and fronting on Chestnut Court, Chestnut Street, and E. Pleasant Street. (That is what prompts me to include members of the Amherst Housing Authority in this letter of concern.)

As a currently able-bodied 77 year-old pedestrian who often walks along Triangle Street, even I have periods of difficult sidewalk access as I pass the 'convenience store', though I enjoy engaging in conversations with the (currently sober) young folks as I carve my pathway through them. It would not take much drinking to make this route, daily and nightly, as or more unsafe and impassible as during the worst of our Barney Blasts. (I need not here do more than touch upon the prospective need for increased police presence and the cost to town taxpayers when that becomes essential.)

Now to the complications of related traffic safety, especially as the (presumably to be hoped for) greater numbers of legal-age beer-and-wine purchasers cluster their cars in the 'convenience store's' few parking spaces on Triangle Street and in the parking lot behind the 'convenience store' building. Even now, drivers recurrently park their vehicles in the reverse direction of the Triangle traffic flow, most of these (currently sober) carefully enough crisscrossing Triangle Street traffic lanes both to park and to speed away with their purchases. The chaos of less-than-careful drivers, along that Triangle Street sidewalk and clustered in the rear parking lot, may be anticipated even at present by what happens in the very same parking lot comes night-time by way of carousing noise and periodic vehicle-path confusion. Most conspicuously dangerous is the exit from that parking lot directly onto E. Pleasant

Street a short distance from the present busy traffic light intersection. Worse, if the proposed traffic rotary replaces the traffic light intersection, the looming chaos of the parking lot exit so close to but not part of the rotary is beyond calm contemplation.

All the more so as we consider inebriated people on foot, whom we have already seen around Cousins, trying to figure out how in the world they can cross Triangle and E. Pleasant Streets with but a swirl of cars circling a rotary and no traffic light to clarify right-of-way for shakily advancing pedestrians.

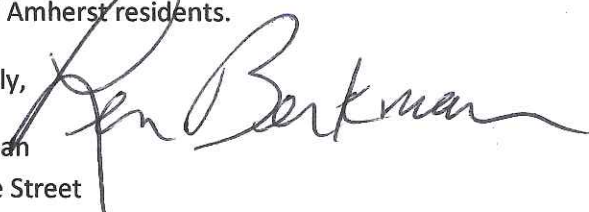
To this mix, I'll add one further exceedingly dicey complication: the automated Bank of America cash machines within a stone's throw of the 'convenience store'. Whether I walked there or drove there, the moment I saw the least sign of matters getting out of hand, I, for one, and I have already heard from others, would no longer risk using this Bank of America kiosk so close to a thirsty clientele. (If I knew whom appropriately to contact at the Bank of America, I would include them among this letter's addressees as well. I certainly hope they have been officially consulted by those of you who are thorough enough to take all important – in fact, urgent – factors into account.)

As the final dimension of the concern I hold above all others here, I ask that you consider the fierce unknowns regarding not only the controversial prospective traffic rotary but regarding the yet-to-be-fully-leased Kendrick Place and the nature of those we will see occupy Kendrick Place and become further pedestrians and drivers in the immediate vicinity. How they and the droves of UMASS students who will be newly drawn to Triangle Street (as we have seen them drawn to our downtown and near-downtown suppliers) will manage their safety in a region of town not designed for such density is up for grabs right now. The 'convenience store' owner's claim of no-problem alcohol sales in his Hatfield and Sunderland chains stands in bizarre contrast with what we know of this residential and High School region of Amherst he has now targeted.

Please, please consider all of the above, and all of the other letters you have received from your equally concerned Amherst residents.

Respectfully,

Len Berkman
66 Cottage Street
Amherst, MA 01002

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Len Berkman", is written over the typed name and address. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.